

Northern California Planting Guide

Green Beans – Planting by May 15th is an early enough start time, though you can try planting earlier depending on weather. Beans don't need a lot of watering to germinate, and planting in cold, wet soil can lead to seed rotting. Water thoroughly and frequently once the plant is flowering. Plants grow large, so space seeds ~18 in. apart.

Beets – A colder-tolerant root crop, beets do well out of direct sunlight. Weeding and thinning beets as they sprout is a must to ensure they are successful and grow large. An addition of a high-nitrogen fertilizer (e.g. chicken manure) once beet starts to form will help growth. Beet greens can be eaten, similar to chard or spinach.

Broccoli – When transplanting in early Spring, use some sort of cover to protect against frost, as well as protecting against insect pests. Broccoli is a cool-weather crop that does well in Spring and Fall, but is also good in Crescent City's Summer; it's frost tolerant and is also a good addition in Winter gardens. After the main head is harvested, most varieties produce good side-shoots for continued harvest. Transplant ~18 in. apart.

Brussel Sprouts – Similar to broccoli, but takes longer to mature. Can be planted in Summer and harvested through late Fall.

Carrots – Great in Crescent City, and very easy to grow. Similar to beets, make sure you stay on top of weeding and thinning once sprouted. Carrots need a lot of water and will continue to grow as long as they are in the ground, and generally taste great big and small.

Cauliflower – Same as broccoli, though cauliflower typically does a little better with warmer temperatures, mid-Summer. When heads emerge, fold leaves over to keep the head white.

Celery – A good cool-weather crop, though celery is not as suited for vigorous growth in our climate like broccoli or brussel sprouts. Celery can sit in pots for months before being transplanted, so seeds can be planted indoors as early as February. It's also slow to mature, and can probably be harvested no earlier than August. Celery is a heavy feeder and will do well with a lot of fertilizer and water.

Corn – Corn is not suited for coastal climates, though that should never stop a gardener from trying. For more reliable growth and harvest, corn should be grown more inland (e.g. Gasquet) or in a greenhouse where temperatures are consistently warm. Make sure you're past your area's last frost before planting.

Cucumber – Can do well both outside and in greenhouses; though if you're inland with more consistent warm temperatures, plant them outside, and if you're coastal, make sure the last frost is over, as cucumbers can't handle frost. With lots of good, consistent watering, they will grow fast and sprawl, make sure you give them plenty of room, or have trellises for them to climb. If transplanting, take care to not disturb roots; it's a good idea to sow seeds in individual pots so roots don't become tangled.

Garlic – Garlic does well when planted in the Fall, giving it a chance to overwinter and then be harvested in late Spring/early Summer. Try to plant early enough for seed to sprout before major

rains, as the rain can cause seed rot. Garlic seeds are the cloves of the garlic itself. Make sure they're well-fertilized at planting, and cover with a good, deep mulch to protect from frost through the winter.

Kale – Similar to broccoli/cauliflower/brussels sprouts. Kale is a great performer in cooler, coastal climates, and is very resistant to frost. Can probably get 4 successive plantings, starting in Spring and ending harvest in Winter. Start seeds in a greenhouse, but leave outside for 1-2 days before transplanting to “harden it off;” this gives it a great flavor, known as “kissed by the frost.” Great for winter gardens.

Collard greens – Basically the same as kale, though it's not quite as hardy. Still does well in colder temperatures, though it's more susceptible to brassica-targeting pests.

Leeks – Like celery, can be planted as early as February and will sit in pots for months before transplanting. Can probably get 2 successions over the season. Responds very well to fertilizer, both in pots and in the ground, liquid or dry. Will sit in the ground for a long time, and can be harvested as-needed.

Lettuce – An incredibly easy, popular vegetable; lettuce can be sown directly into the ground after last frost, or started in pots in a greenhouse. Lots of varieties: some are cold-tolerant and great for on the coast, and some are heat-tolerant and do better inland.

· **Lettuce mix/loose greens** – Do very well also. Makes a good early Spring crop if there's space inside the greenhouse, or plant outdoors once temperatures are warmer and there's no more threat of frost. Can be planted nearly anywhere.

Onion – Plant in very well fertilized soil. Onions have a fairly short planting window and do best when planted in Spring, after major rains have stopped. Varieties are dependent on the number of hours of daylight, so check what variety you're planting and you'll have a good idea of when the bulb should be forming. Consistent watering is important for good bulb formation.

Peas – Another great performer in Del Norte, peas will do very well especially when they have a trellis to climb. Can be planted when ground is naturally wet, and will require less water for germination. Once they sprout and start to grow, give them plenty of water.

Peppers – Can be transplanted in the ground early, around early February; or can be overwintered. Peppers need to be grown in warm climates, so plant them in the greenhouse for successful growth, especially if you're on the coast. In warmer places like Gasquet, you can plant them outside, but peppers are heat-tolerant and thrive in hot weather. Hungarian Hot Wax and Jalapenos are both good performers in Del Norte.

Potatoes – Can be planted as early as March, but to be sure of a good crop, May 15 is a more conservative time, to avoid the last frost. For planting potatoes, you get last year's potatoes (or “seed potatoes”) and cut them into golf ball-sized pieces, ensuring there is at least one “eye” on the piece (“eyes” are the dimples you see on the surface of potatoes). Plant about 10 in. apart and make small hills of dirt to plant into; this makes sure the plant has plenty of soft dirt beneath it to produce more potatoes. Takes about 3 months until harvest. Potatoes don't need a lot of water, and can sometimes have a successful harvest just from soil and atmospheric moisture; in

fact, so farmers never water their potatoes even once!

Radishes – Another great performer, these can be planted earlier in cooler weather. Radishes need relatively little water, but will still benefit from regular watering. They can be particularly susceptible to certain pests, so if you're growing a lot of them, cover them with row cover; and no matter how many you grow, keep an eye on them for aphids and flea beetles. Radishes are very easy and can be grown by just about anyone; great for kids, especially around harvest time because of their colorful roots.

Spinach – Can be transplanted or direct-sown, just make sure they have space to grow (~1-2 in.). Similar to lettuce, but are not quite as easy to grow; make sure you use a good nitrogen fertilizer to ensure green leafy growth.

Squash (summer) – Examples of summer squash: zucchini, yellow zucchini, crook neck, patty pan, and others. As the name implies, summer squash is a warmer season crop. Planted at the right times, you can get 3 successions of summer squash over the season, usually starting in April or May. As plant grows, clip fruits when they are approximately pencil-sized for a couple weeks; this will help the plant grow larger, and grow larger fruits later. Smaller squash are more flavorful, if left on the plant too long the squash will become large and woody and will lose a lot of flavor.

Squash (winter) – Examples of winter squash (gourds): butternut, spaghetti, delicata, carnival, kombocha, etc. Plant when there is no longer any risk of frost, typically mid-May. You will likely only get one succession of winter squash, but individual plants produce a lot. Most varieties are low maintenance, just keep weeds under control and water periodically. Most varieties will also sprawl, so give these plenty of room.

Strawberries – These berries will last a few years in one spot ("perennial"), so choose your spot to plant them wisely. Try to plant them in raised beds, or somewhere off the grass; if berries lay in the grass, they very quickly will rot. They will benefit from a lot of water.

Swiss Chard – Similar to kale, but not as cold-tolerant. Rainbow varieties are great especially in kids' gardens, because of the many vibrant and varied colors of the stocks. Each succession will produce a lot to harvest. These can be susceptible to pests and pathogens, so keep an eye on them for any signs of distress and then take necessary steps.

Tomatoes – Another warmer weather crop, tomatoes can be grown outdoors in places like Gasquet and Klamath; but if you're closer to the coast and want a reliable harvest, plant them in a greenhouse. They take a little more time in the pot than most plants, so you can start the seed early. When you transplant, snip off extra leaves from the branches (called "suckers") to ensure stronger growth and better, larger tomatoes. Make sure you have some sort of trellis or lines for them to grow up. These can be hurt by high-nitrogen fertilizers; they will do best in soil strong in calcium (consider adding eggshells). When watering, do less-frequent watering with a lot of water, as opposed to frequently with less water; this ensures strong, deep roots.

Cover crop – The benefits of planting cover crop in your garden can't be overstated. Briefly: "cover crop" is a mix of nitrogen-fixing plants (called "legumes") that grow through the winter

to improve the quality of your soil. They take nitrogen out of the air and “fix” it in their roots to make it available in the soil for when you plant your garden in the spring. Another benefit is that the cover crop prevents soil erosion, keeping your soil rich and workable during the months when you aren’t gardening, as well as suppressing weed growth. Some examples of legumes to plant in a cover crop: vetch, fava beans, rye grass, clover, peas. Sow seeds in the fall after all your crops are out of the ground, and before your first frost. In the spring time, mow down the tall cover crop and then work into the soil by tilling. Plant your spring garden once all the green matter has been biodegraded into the soil.

Herbs – Some herbs are perennials (will last multiple years) and some are annuals (only last one season, but can have multiple successions). Some annuals: cilantro, basil, fennel, dill. Fennel and dill are very beneficial to the garden, as they attract a lot of beneficial insects. Cilantro is good in spring; when it gets too hot it will go to seed very quickly. Some perennials: oregano, parsley, thyme, catnip, mint, rosemary, sages, chamomile.

This planting calendar and guide were based on Eddie Tanner’s The Humboldt Kitchen Gardener, as well as personal notes based on the planting practices of Ocean Air Farms. For more information and resources on planting individual crops, as well as general tips on planting in our region, consult The Humboldt Kitchen Gardener, or seed magazines such as “Territorial Seeds.”